

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Historical Vignette: Hiroshima, 1955

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In July 2000, the Mayor of Hiroshima asked several alumni of the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission (ABCC) to send him Peace Messages for the 55th anniversary of the explosion on August 6. To my knowledge, these have not been published. My message was a historical vignette concerning two monumental ventures that gained international attention in 1955. They concerned collaborations between U.S. physicians and Japanese with regard to the effects of the bomb. I witnessed the unfolding of these events when I was Chief of Pediatrics at the Hiroshima ABCC. In one, an American surgeon was key to the literary success of a Japanese physician. In the other, a daring venture sponsored by an American medical group owed its success largely to a Japanese-American woman who had returned to Japan to marry before the war.

In 1951, Dr. Warner Wells, a surgeon from the University of North Carolina, was at the ABCC (name changed in 1975 to the Radiation Effects Research Foundation), where survivors of the bomb are examined by the Japanese and American staff for late effects of radiation exposure. There was little need for a surgeon there, so he visited medical clinics in Hiroshima, where he lectured on surgical diseases and pursued his interest in overgrown scar tissue (keloids). He learned that Dr. Michihiko Hachiya, Director of the Communications Hospital, had written a diary during his 56-day hospitalization for wounds from the bomb. Dr. Wells sought him out and received permission to have the diary translated for publication in English. It had been published serially in the *Journal of the Communications Bureau*, where it circulated only among the medical staffs who provided care nationally for postal, telephone and telegraph workers. Dr. Wells brought the publication to ABCC, where it was translated into imperfect English with an attractive Japanese "accent". It was inevitable that this feature would be lost in editing, carefully done by Dr. Wells.

It was very exciting to read the book reviews of *Hiroshima Diary* (1) in 1955. They were prominently featured by *The New York Times*, *Saturday Review*, *Newsweek* and *Atlantic Monthly*, among others, and translated into 14 languages. The royalties, which must have been substantial, were declined for personal use by Dr. Hachiya and Dr. Wells. Dr. Hachiya requested \$10,000 for a fund to pay for the education of children who were made orphans by the bomb. When they repaid the loans, the funds were recycled.

Also in 1955, Norman Cousins, editor of the *Saturday Review*, arranged for 25 young Hiroshima women with severe scar contractures to be treated at Mt. Sinai Hospital. At the last minute, while at ABCC, the New York group realized they needed as a chaperone a mature friend, guide and interpreter who knew both cultures. The visitors discussed the problem as they stood beside the desk of Helen Yokoyama, a Nisei interpreter who had majored in psychology at UCLA. Her travel documents were in order, and she was immediately available. She left with the maidens and was with them as they adjusted to the homes of Quaker families, where they stayed. She was with them at the hospital when they underwent surgery. Without her, the 18-month mission during which 138 operations were performed would have had a rough course and may well

have collapsed. The story is told in books by Rodney Barker [*The Hiroshima Maidens* (2)] and Anne Chisholm [*Faces of Hiroshima* (3)], which unfortunately are out of print. Helen Yokoyama repeatedly turned aside appeals to record the history of her experience.

Thus did working together in medicine help to heal the animosity from a war that had ended 10 years earlier.

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References

1. M. Hachiya, *Hiroshima Diary. The Journal of a Japanese Physician, August 6–September 30, 1945*. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1955 and 1995.
2. R. Barker, *The Hiroshima Maidens. A Story of Courage, Compassion and Survival*. Viking Penguin, New York, 1985.
3. A. Chisholm, *Faces of Hiroshima. A Report*. Jonathan Cape, London, 1985.

Response to the Commentary by J. F. Ziegler (*Radiat. Res.* **152**, 219–222, 1999)

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This letter is in response to Ziegler's (1) commentary criticizing the methods and results of ICRU Report No. 49: *Stopping Powers and Ranges for Protons and Alpha Particles* (2).

REMARKS ON SOME OF ZIEGLER'S STATEMENTS

Some of Ziegler's statements are useful, particularly the detail with which he considered some of the data for elemental substances of higher atomic numbers, and caused us to review the basis of the results in ICRU Report 49. However, as we shall indicate below, a number of his points are wide of the mark, and a careful examination does not support his conclusions regarding the accuracy of the stopping-power and range tables in ICRU Report 49. As done by Ziegler, we will mainly classify our remarks in terms of particle energy: low to medium energy (<1 MeV/nucleon) and high energy (>1 MeV/nucleon). At low to medium energies, Ziegler confines his criticism to proton electronic stopping powers; at high energies, where reliance is on Bethe theory, there is no loss in generality by considering only protons. Therefore, when they pertain to specific examples, we can confine our remarks to protons.

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